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For Immediate Release  
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**Environment Department to Hold Open Houses on Dust and Smoke in  
Southern New Mexico**

(Santa Fe, NM) – In order to provide the public with information about windblown dust and new open burning and smoke management requirements, the New Mexico Environment Department will host an Open Houses in **Roswell, Hobbs and Deming** next week. The events will be held as follows:

**Roswell: Monday, May 17, from 6:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m.** at the Campus Union Building, Room 110, Eastern New Mexico University, 48 University Boulevard.

**Hobbs: Tuesday, May 18, from 6:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m.** at the Continuing Education Building, Room CE-113, New Mexico Junior College, 5317 Lovington Highway.

**Deming: Wednesday, May 19, from 6:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m.** at the Mimbres Valley Special Events Center, 2300 E. Pine.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has standards to regulate levels of dust, or particulate matter, in the air that can cause serious health problems. Monitoring of particulate matter concentrations in the air is done throughout New Mexico by the Environment Department. Strong winds in Chaves County during 2003 added dust to the air, resulting in the air quality exceeding the federal health standard for particulate matter in Roswell.

The Open House will provide information about health risks associated with windblown dust and steps people can take to lower levels of dust in the air that we all breathe. The Open House will also feature information about the plan that the Environment Department must complete to make sure that exceedances of the federal standard caused by high winds do not result in more stringent air quality requirements.

In addition, information will be available on the new state regulations for open burning and smoke management. Beginning June 1, outdoor burning of household trash will no longer be allowed throughout New Mexico, excluding tribal lands. New requirements for burning vegetation went into effect on December 31, 2003. Handouts and brochures explaining the new requirements will be available.

For more information, please contact Andy Berger, Environmental Analyst with the Air Quality Bureau, at (505) 955-8034 or Jon Goldstein, NMED Communications Director at (505) 827-0314.

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